

Students Protest Proposed Education Cuts

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Students and education advocates protested at the state Capitol on Friday in the wake of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal to make school funding cuts to help balance the state budget.

Schwarzenegger on Thursday proposed billions in spending cuts and a temporary 1.5 percent sales tax increase to close a worsening state budget deficit.

The state deficit was estimated at \$11.2 billion through the fiscal year that ends June 30.

The GOP governor outlined a plan that would reduce K-12 education funding by \$2.5 billion and funding for the University of California and California State University systems by \$132 million.

Lt. Gov. John Garamendi applauded the governor's call for a special legislative session to address the budget, adding that "cuts are a vital piece" of the solution.

But he said education already suffered heavy funding reductions in the current budget.

"These cuts have already devastated education," Garamendi told those gathered outside of the Capitol.

Overall, the tax hikes Schwarzenegger outlined Thursday would raise \$4.7 billion. They also include raising the registration fee for vehicles by \$12 and taxing companies that extract oil from California, which he said would generate \$528 million this year.

Schwarzenegger said the state's economic condition has deteriorated sharply since he signed the budget for the current fiscal year in September. The stock market has cratered and the housing market has continued its slide.

While he also proposed \$4.5 billion cuts to state programs, he said cuts alone would not solve California's budget problem. He said the state would have to take even more from public education without new revenue.

